

Plato's Socrates: A pastiche of Socratic quotations  
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This small selection of quotations and paraphrases portraying Plato's Socrates is loosely translated from dialogues variously dated as early, middle, and late: *Apology*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic* 7 & 10, *Timaeus*. The final speech of the *Apology* serves as a narrative frame. This is a pastiche and not intended to represent the historical Socrates accurately; the intention is to provide a 'flavour' of Plato's character.

Gentlemen, before I go to my death, may I have a moment to speak with those who voted for my acquittal? For I consider you my friends, and I want you to hear that death is no evil.... [*Apology* 39E-40A]

To fear death is just another form of that old vice I have always fought all my life in Athens, to suppose you know what you do not know.... [*Apology* 29A]

But I also have the gift of prophecy, my friends, and like a swan who sings most beautifully before she goes to join her master Apollo, I begin to see the journey ahead... [*Phaedo* 84E-85A]

May I tell you a story? The earth is nothing like we think, my friends... [*Phaedo* 108D]

If you could only lift your head above the air like a fish out of water and see it from above, I think, you would see the earth as it really is – a sphere of many colours afloat in the midst of the heavens lit by the kindled Sun – like the colours used by our painters, but much brighter and purer; sea-green, gold, whiter than chalk or snow, and vast... and we are like ants around the tiniest part... [*Phaedo* 109E-110B]

And around it in the pure starry sky revolves the great procession of the gods, the seven wanderers who stand guard over the numbers of time, a moving image of eternity [*Timaeus* 38D]... the star of Hermes, of Aphrodite...

But the greatest, the star of Zeus, drives his winged chariot first in the procession, looking over everything and putting all things in order, ... the many aisles which the blessed gods take up and back, each seeing to her own work, while any soul that is able and wishes to do so follows along, since jealousy has no place in the gods' chorus, winging around the shining spindle of Necessity.

When the gods go to feast, they have a steep climb to the high tier at the rim of heaven [*Phaedrus*]... And the true heavens, my friends, are the most beautiful and the most exact of all visible things. [*Republic* 7, 529C] There is a true living being there,

immortal and divine, a spark of that very immortality in every one of us, you and me, implanted in a star. [*Timaeus* 90B]

We must turn ourselves from here to there, friends, and make our minds like the mind of the world.

Now the place beyond heaven no earthly poet has ever sung truly. Still, this is the way it is – risky as it may be, I must attempt to speak the truth. Even the most beautiful visible motions fall far short of the true motions beyond the heavens, which trace out the true mathematical equations of the universe, intelligible, beautiful, just... [*Republic* 7]. What is in this place is without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to the eye of the mind, the pilot of the soul, delighted at last to be seeing what is real and watching what is true: and this is where we find true Beauty, Justice, Knowledge, Being, and Courage: the meadow of the truth, which only the mind can see. [*Phaedrus* 247D]

And so I have sought, as the Delphic inscription enjoins, to “know myself” first and foremost... [*Phaedrus* 229E]

For to that place the soul carries away nothing, nothing at all, save for its education and mode of living [*Phaedo* 107D]; if every soul is immortal, every choice matters. [*Republic* 10, 617E].

And so I believe that a truly good person cannot be harmed in life or in death [*Apology* 41D], and I have spent my life among you urging you to care, not for wealth, power, or honour, but for wisdom and the excellence of your soul.

But now the hour to part has come. I go to die, and you to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except the god.